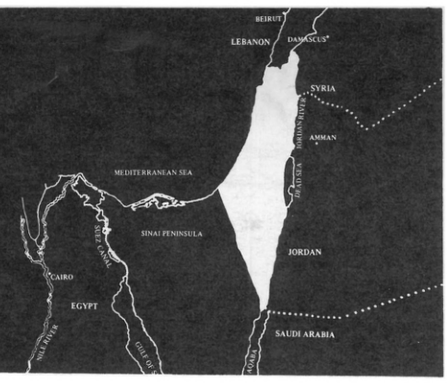
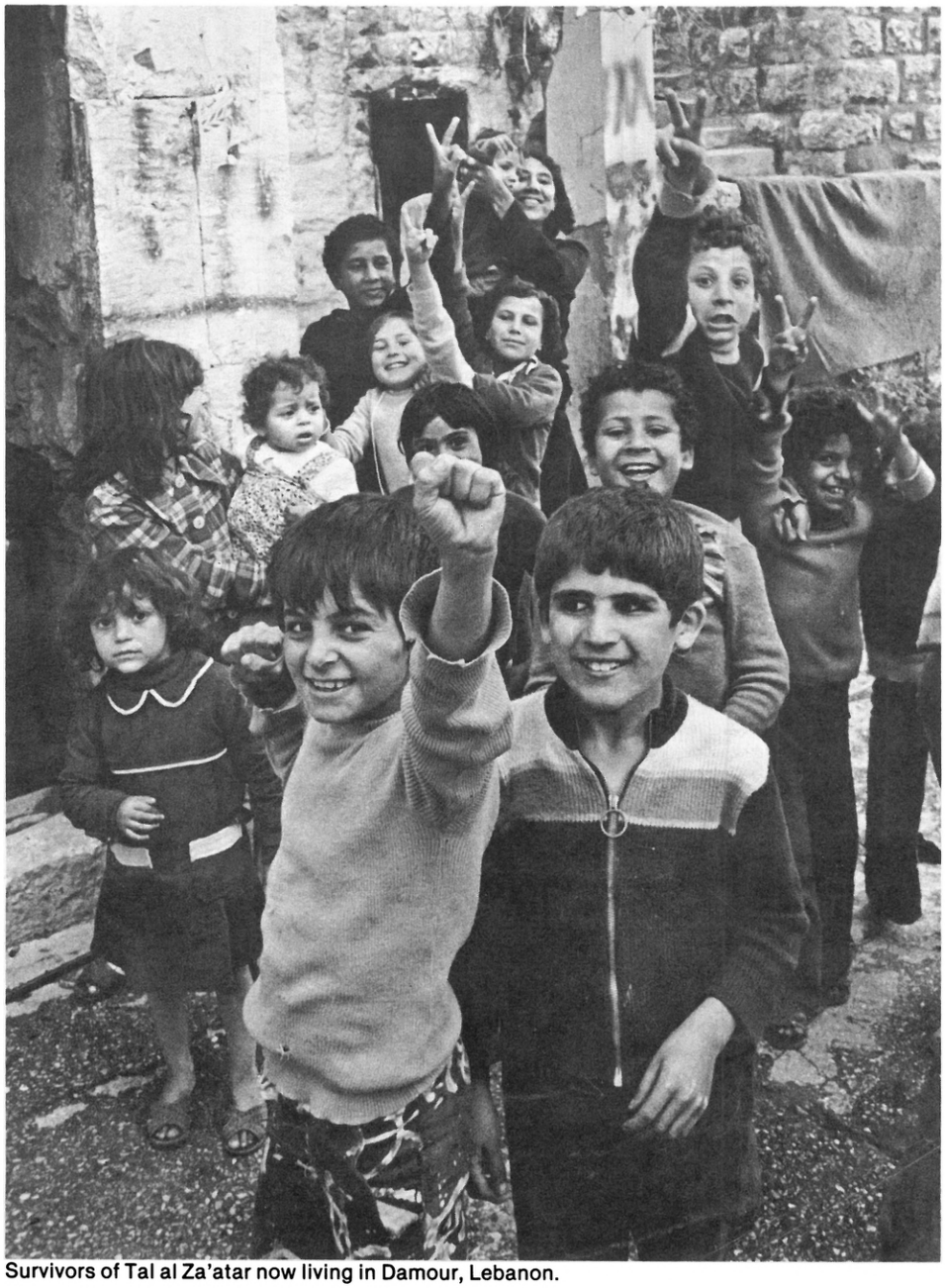
Palestine!



Vol. II, No. 2 Published by the Palestine Solidarity Committee New York, New York January, 1978

A FIRST HAND REPORT ON THE CURRENT STRUGGLE:

"All Palestinians Share One Goal—To Liberate Our Homeland."



Survivors of Tal al Za'atar now living in Damour, Lebanon.

This photo essay was produced by two members of the Palestine Solidarity Committee, a photographer and a writer, who visited the Middle East this past spring.

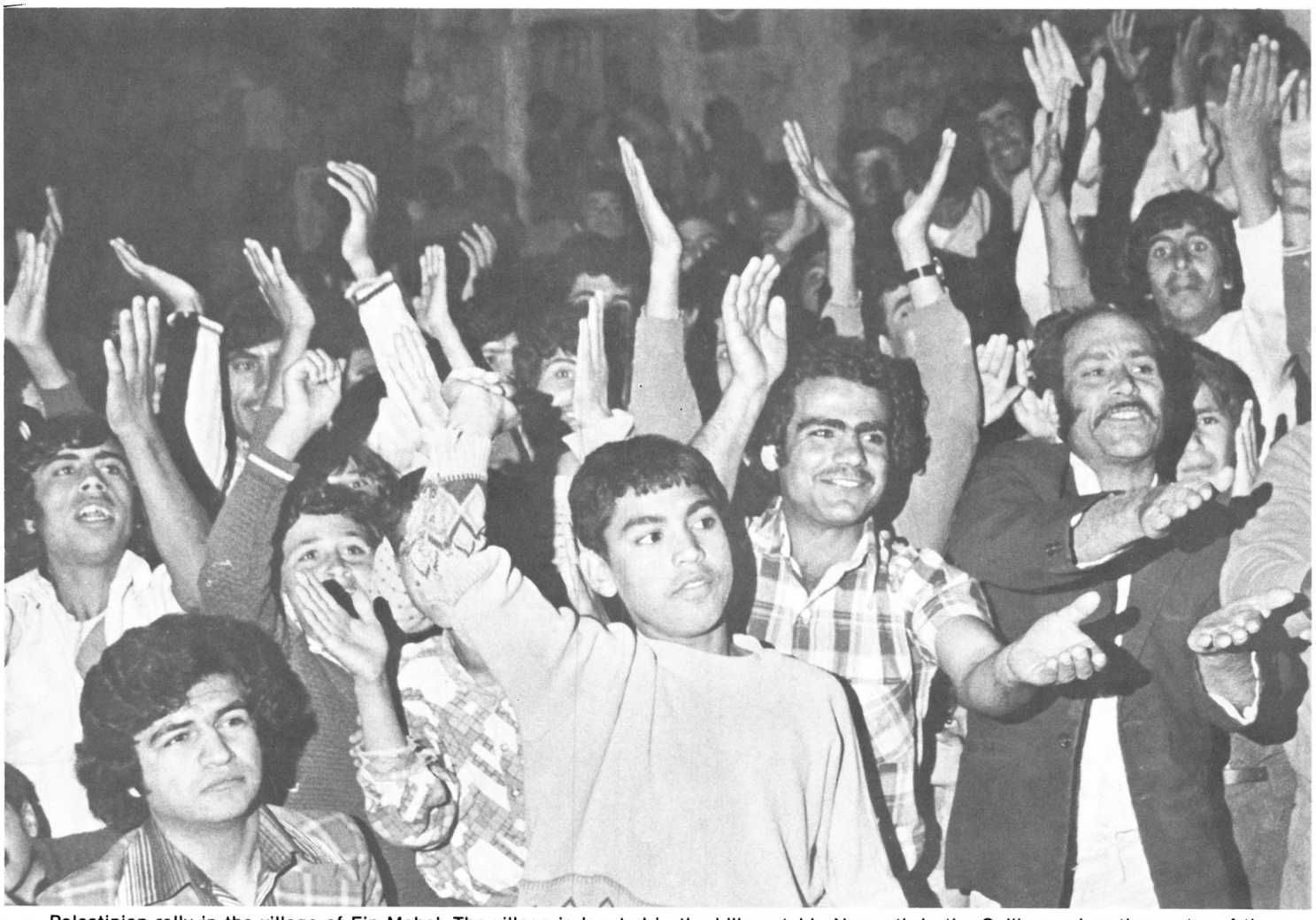
We met with Palestinians living in their homeland under Israeli occupation, with PLO leaders, refugee families in camps, activists in the workers' and women's unions and fighters on the front lines in southern Lebanon.

We saw first hand the determined resistance to intensified Israeli repression in Palestine, as well as the spirited reorganizing of the Palestinians who were a key target of reactionary forces during the long war in Lebanon.

"All Palestinians share one goal: to liberate Palestine," a veteran fighter against Zionist aggression in Palestine in 1948, in Lebanon in 1973 and who fought in defense of Tal al Za'atar in 1976 told us.

"And if a peole has a just goal," he concluded with certainty, "they will achieve it."

Resisting the Occupation of Palestine



Palestinian rally in the village of Ein Mahel. The village is located in the hills outside Nazareth in the Galilee region, the center of the Palestinian population living within the area on which the Israeli state was established in 1948.

"Politics dominates our lives," explained one Palestinian living in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. "It is always discussed. Everywhere in the West Bank, when people visit each other, the main topic of conversation is the Palestine issue and the activities of the PLO."

"Palestinians here are unanimously against the occupation," another West Bank resident pointed out to us.

Protest strikes in the West Bank against the occupation receive widespread suppport from the Palestinian merchants, and demonstrations have the participation of workers, students and villagers, with young and old raising Palestinian flags and chanting slogans in support of the PLO.

The Israeli authorities try to arrest whomever they can at these demonstrations, and often even pick up people at home or at their workplaces. "Most families have had at least one member in jail," one Palestinian told us, noting the large number of Palestinian political prisoners.

"I was held for two months in the Moscobiya in Jerusalem," a Palestinian schoolteacher told us. "Two weeks for 'questioning' and six weeks for 'administrative detention.' There were no charges. First they accused me of membership in one Palestinian commando organization and then another one. They beat me on the head with a rubber baton and they kicked me. They try to get 'confessions' with these beatings."

Palestinian girls in the city of Ramallah build roadblock outside their school building during May 15 protests to the Israeli occupation.

The signs of military occupation are ever present on the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In Nablus, Ramallah, Hebron, Gaza and other Palestinian cities lie the concrete Israeli prisons built to contain the outbreaks of protests from the Palestinian population. Crackles from the Ramallah prison loudspeaker, audible even on the other side of town, break the silence of the night and are a constant reminder of the occupation.

Each morning Israeli troops in an armoured personnel carrier station themselves in front of the Kalandia refugee camp school in the West Bank to make sure the students feel their presence.

In almost every municipality in the West Bank and Gaza, whose population of 1,200,000 have been under Israeli occupation for over ten years now, stand the barbed wire-surrounded offices and barracks of the "military governor." Arabs in the rest of Palestine, where the Israeli state was established in 1948, also lived under military rule until 1966; this region's half-million Palestinians now live under a more consolidated system of Israeli settler colonialism.

These are the stark realities of how Israel has "liberated" Palestine, as Israel's new Prime Minister Menachem Begin likes to put it.

"Everyone feels the oppression here," explains one Palestinian, "nothing is safe or guaranteed."

Nevertheless, the local Palestinian population has proven to be one "fact" that the Israelis have been able to erase. Protests against occupation have grown steadily over the years and have mushroomed in militancy. More than twelve Palestinians have been shot and killed by Israeli soldiers during demonstrations in the past year and a half and still the protests continue.

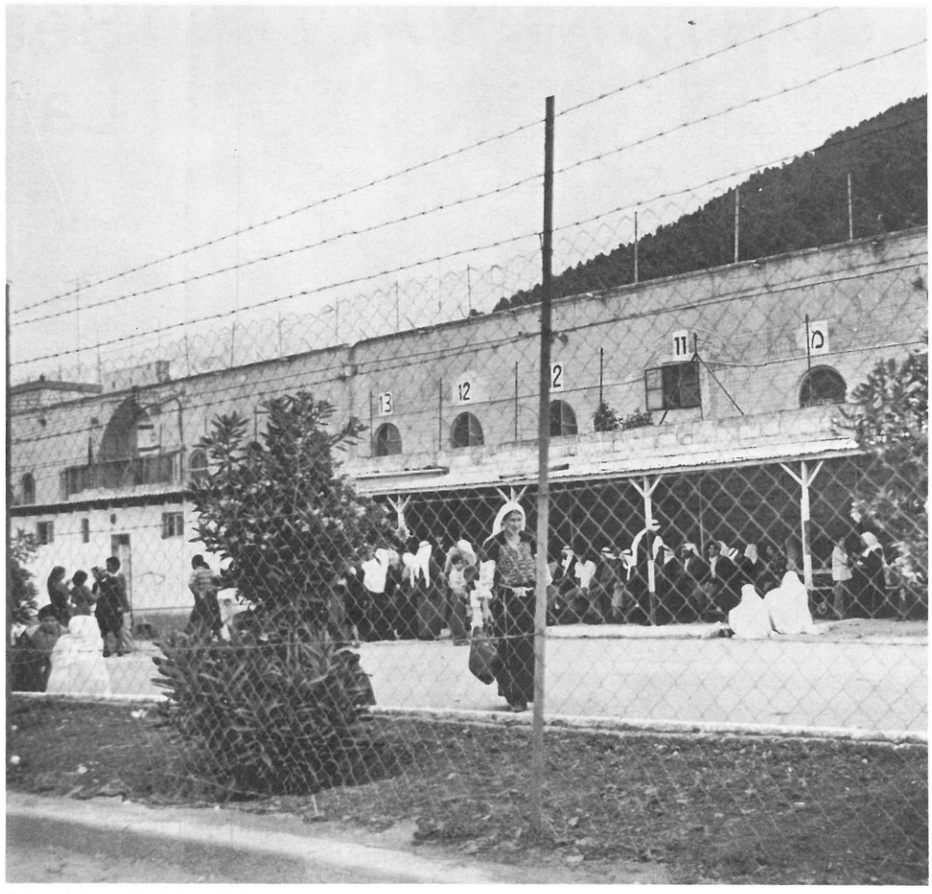
We could feel the harshness of the conflict in the air this past May 15, the anniversary of the founding of the Israeli state and a traditional day of protest among all Palestinians.

The Israeli soldiers in tanks and armoured personnel carriers were out in force, in the city squares, along main roads, and on the outskirts of villages in the 1967-occupied areas. Roadblocks where Palestinians must show their identification, normally stationed on all main arteries, were increased in number.

Businesses in Ramallah, Nablus, Jerusalem and other Palestinian cities were closed for a general strike called by the mayors and other local Palestinian leaders. In Ramallah, the steel gates were pulled over all stores except for Uncle Sam's Restaurant and the Israel National Bank.

In the afternoon, the streets of Nablus were deserted except for patrolling Israeli soldiers. One soldier, a former American, explained that the military governor ordered a day-long curfew after Palestinian youths set up a roadblock of burning tires earlier in the day and showered the soldiers with rocks. The citizens were not allowed outside their homes, soldiers patrolled every street corner on foot, in jeeps and armoured personnel carriers, and the rocks were still scattered in the main square.

Both before and after May 15, protests were weekly, and often daily occurences. During our visit Palestinian students from Bir Zeit University in the West Bank were traveling back and forth nightly to the nearby village of Deir Abu Mashel to help stand guard with the villagers who had come under nightly attacks from a group of armed Israelis. The Israelis were demanding that the village evacuate so that an Israeli settlement could be built in its place.



Palestinians visit family members held in the Nablus prison. The Israeli government maintains large prisons in each Palestinian district.

Israeli soldiers enforcing a curfew May 15 in Nablus, a West Bank city of 45,000 Palestinians.

Palestine! is published by the Palestine Solidarity Committee, Post Office Box 1757 Manhattanville Station, New York, New York 10027.
Subscription: $5/ten issues.
All photographs in this issue were taken by *Palestine!* photographer Milton Taam in the spring of 1977 in Lebanon and occupied Palestine. Text by Barbara Lou Shafer.

Palestinian peasant plowing under his plum and pear trees near the village of Artas in the West Bank.

Israeli destruction of Palestinian homes in the Old City of Jerusalem. Entire empty foreground is site of already demolished homes. New structures in upper left are built exclusively for Israelis.

Settling on Stolen Lands...Again

A central aspect of the process of Israeli colonization is the confiscation of Palestinian land. The land, the Palestinians' source of livelihood for thousands of years, is constantly being threatened. The Israeli state has expropriated 90% of the Palestinian-owned land in the region it conquered in 1948—and continues to confiscate land in this area, particularly near the Palestinian city of Nazareth—and the government began the same practice as soon as it occupied the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967.

When confiscating the land throughout the years, the Israelis have repeatedly asserted that most Palestinian land is an "uninhabited desert." Travel through occupied Palestine belies this myth. We saw acres upon acres of land being farmed by the Palestinians, and more used for grazing. In the West Bank, the olive trees, planted centuries before the establishment of Israel in 1948, grow on terraces hand-built into the hillsides. Vegetables thrive on the smaller flat fields and wheat in the larger ones. In the Gaza Strip expansive orange groves and fields of almond trees and date palms reach up to the roadsides.

The Palestinians whose lands are expropriated are forced into the pool of cheap labor for Israeli construction and agribusiness. The Palestinian workers commute long distances often to be hired on a daily basis. Their wages are far less than those of Israeli workers.

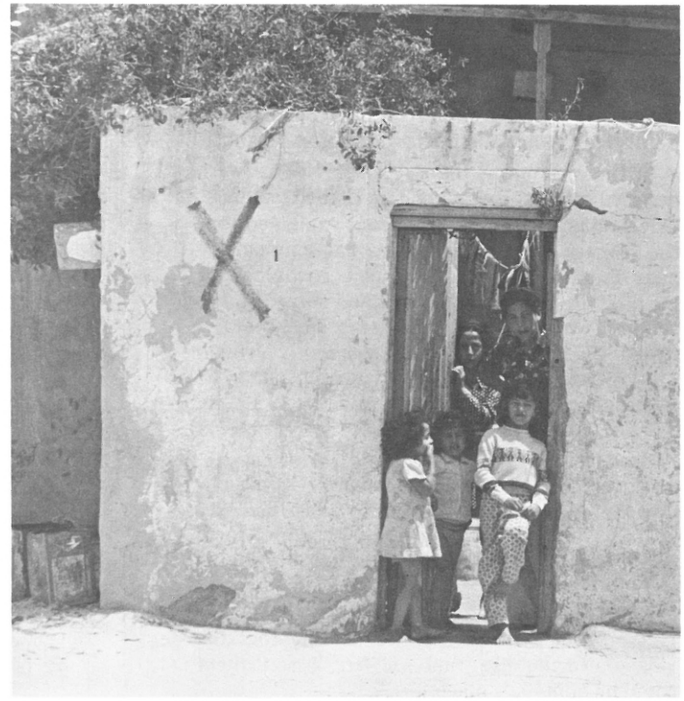
ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS ON PALESTINIAN LANDS

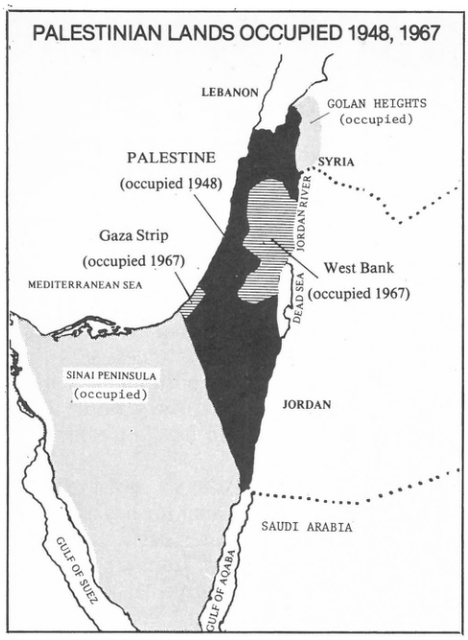
Scores of Israeli settlements are being built on the expropriated Palestinian lands, with the aim of surrounding and controlling the Palestinian population, as well as expanding the Zionist presence in Palestine. Boasting of this latter aspect, the current Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan once asserted, "Borders are not set by markings on a map. Borders are determined by settlement."

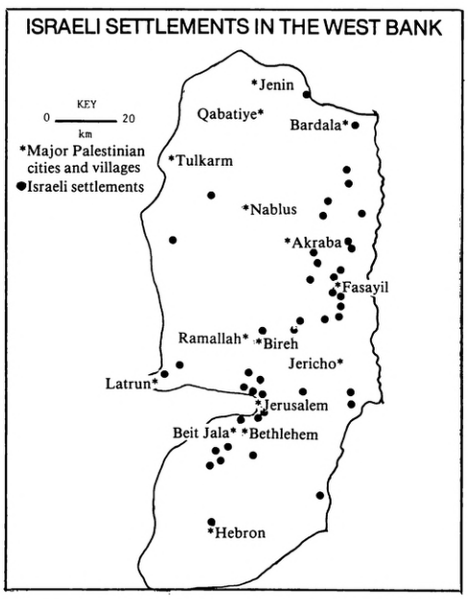
We toured the settlements of the West Bank, where new expensive graded, paved roads crisscross the hills and valleys to connect settlements to each other. Along with new water projects, telephone cables, and high voltage electric power lines, it all adds up to an enormous infrastructure financed by the government to the tune of at least $500 million.

The Zionist strategy of building settlements to extend its territories was pursued vigorously beginning in the 1920's, leading up to the establishment of the Israeli state in 1948. And from 1967 through the present, one resident told us, "They've been pulling it off for a second time" in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Palestinian home in Rafah refugee camp in the Gaza Strip marked with a red "X" by Israeli authorities for demolition and eviction.







As the Israeli settlers often bring in mobile or modular homes, Palestinians in some areas literally wake up in the morning to find a new Israeli settlement on their land—land that the Israeli military had earlier seized for "security reasons."

One prong of the Israeli settlement strategy for the West Bank is aimed at encircling and isolating the Palestinian population centers. New high rise apartment complexes in and near Jerusalem, Hebron and Bethlehem are cities in themselves with housing for 39,000 Israelis.

Another prong of the Israeli strategy is to barricade the eastern edge of the West Bank with a string of settlements along the Jordan River Valley. The West Bank's three other sides are bordered by the Palestinian lands which Israel took over in 1948.

The Israeli settlements in the Jordan Valley form a ladder, with the Jordan River and the Allon Road as the tall north-to-south lengths and connecting roads as the rungs in this swath of land the length of the entire valley and up to 13 miles wide (more than one-fourth the width of the West Bank.) One thousand Israeli settlers and 18,000 Palestinians now live in the area. The Israelis control 80% of the land, acquired through confiscations.

Midway along the Allon Road, we saw the Israeli settlement of Gitit. Gitit is built on land farmed for generations by the Palestinian villagers of Akraba. When the villagers of Akraba were ordered to evacuate for "security reasons" in 1971, they refused to go. So in 1972 the Israelis sprayed the valley with defoliants—U.S. war surplus from Viet Nam—which destroyed the crops and forced out the Palestinians. By 1975 the land was again arable and the Israeli military base there was converted into the civilian settlement of Gitit. We passed a ditch for telephone cables they had just begun digging several weeks earlier. The Gitit settlers are digging in for good.

Later we came to the Israeli settlement at Mehola, at the northern tip of the Allon Road. Mehola dug a water well in 1968 in between the Palestinian village of Bardala and the village's water supply. The Bardala communal well, which supplied water for irrigation as well as to each Palestinian house, began to dry up and the Palestinians had to lower their pump. But still, the Israeli settlement receives 1,000-1,500 cubic meters of water an hour, and Bardala receives only 200 cm/hour. Now the well is drying up again, and technical difficulties may prevent the Palestinians from lowering their pump again.

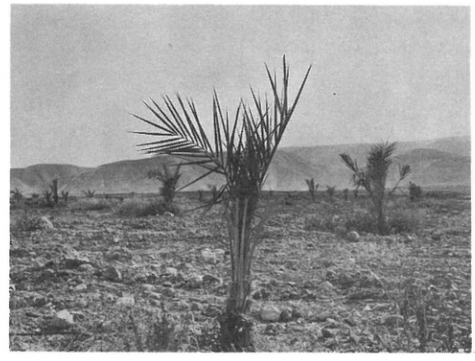
The occupation authorities have "offered" to provide the Bardala villagers with water, but the villagers refuse to become dependent on the Israelis in this manner.

Most Israeli settlements in the Jordan Valley, where the soil is rich but the use of irrigation must be carefully planned, have built themselves elaborate water pumping and storage systems—all entirely illegal according to the Geneva Conventions regarding occupied lands.

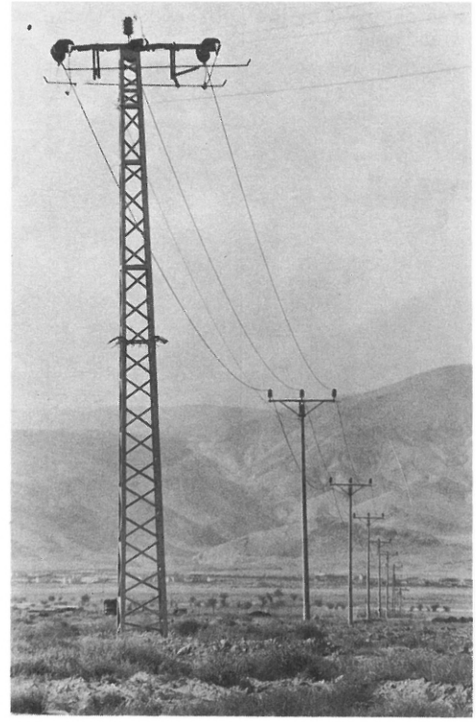
Meanwhile Palestinians have been prohibited from digging wells since the occupation of the area in 1967, and many have been forcibly shut down.

As one would expect, Palestinian opposition to the Israeli settlements is widespread and militant. During our visit, villagers in Qabatiye in the northern part of the West Bank were staging militant demonstrations since they saw advertisements in the Hebrew press soliciting Israelis to help build new settlements on Qabatiye lands. Israeli soldiers killed two demonstrators during one of these protests.

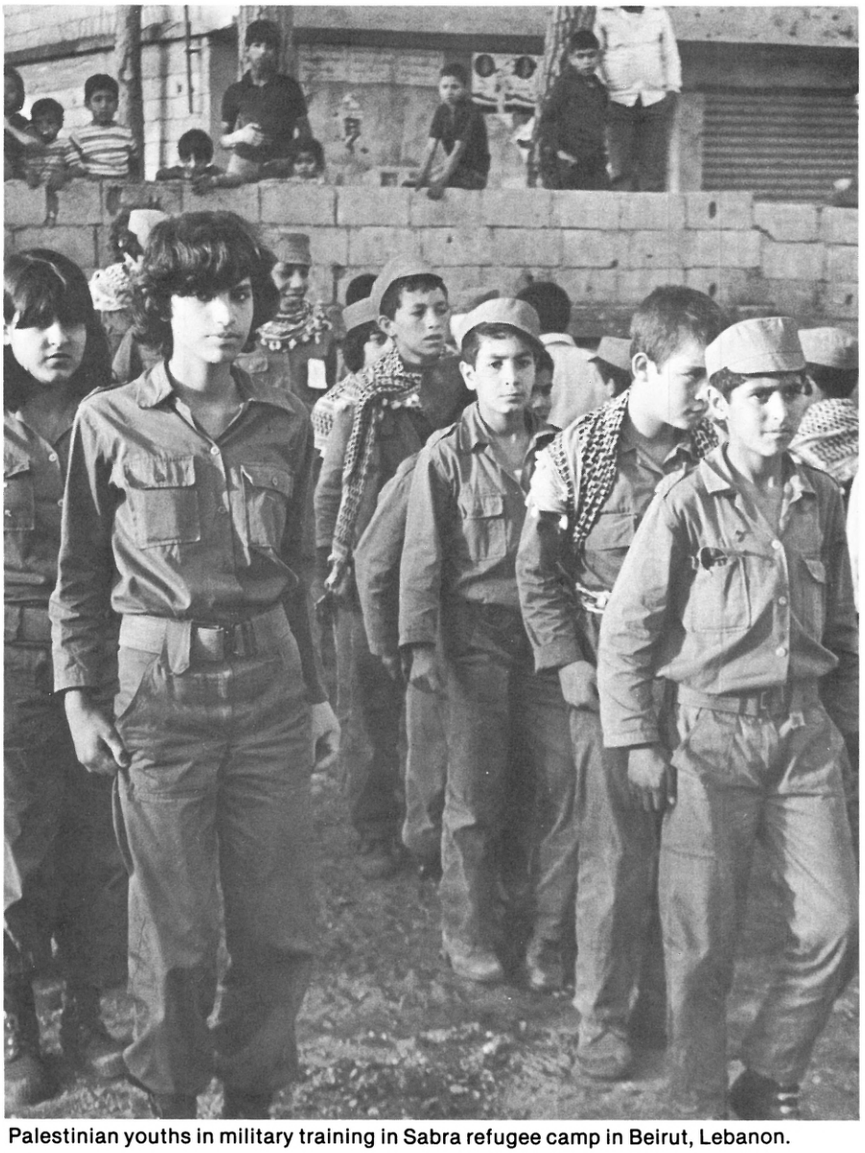
Israeli "French Hill" settlement overlooking Jerusalem, built on Arab land seized in 1967 war.



The Israeli settlements are being built with an eye toward permanence. Date palms (above) at the Tomer settlement in the Jordan River Valley of the West Bank must grow for decades before they bear dates. High voltage power lines (below) are used for the settlements in the Jordan Valley for electricity whereas local generators would be used if temporary settlement was planned.



Refugees Determined to Return to Palestine



Palestinian youths in military training in Sabra refugee camp in Beirut, Lebanon.

Palestinian refugees we spoke with were united in their demand to return to their homeland and their assertion that the Palestine Liberation Organization is their sole legitimate representative. The refugees—numbering one and a half million people—were forced out of Palestine in 1948 and 1967.

In a classroom in Lebanon, we interviewed one eight year old boy who had lived through the 1976 bloody right-wing siege of the Tal al Za'atar refugee camp during the Lebanese war. When we asked him where he was from, he told us: "Palestine is my homeland. Even though I was born in Lebanon, Palestine is my homeland." When asked what he wants to be when he grows older, he told us, "a teacher, and for sure I will be a fighter."

Another survivor of Tal al Za'atar we spoke with is a 21-year old woman who is now caring for her own child as well as the six children of her sister killed in the siege of the camp. She told us through a translator: "I support the PLO because it is my representative and it is doing something for our return to our homeland."

The boy and the woman are now living in the village of Damour, Lebanon, along with more than 15,000 other survivors of the 53-day siege of Tal al Za'atar. Despite the suffering these people have endured, Damour vibrates with life and struggle. A banner hailing the "Courage of Karameh"—a key battle fought by the Palestinians in 1968—hangs over the town's marketplace. In the early morning hours the chants of youths in military training echo through the air.

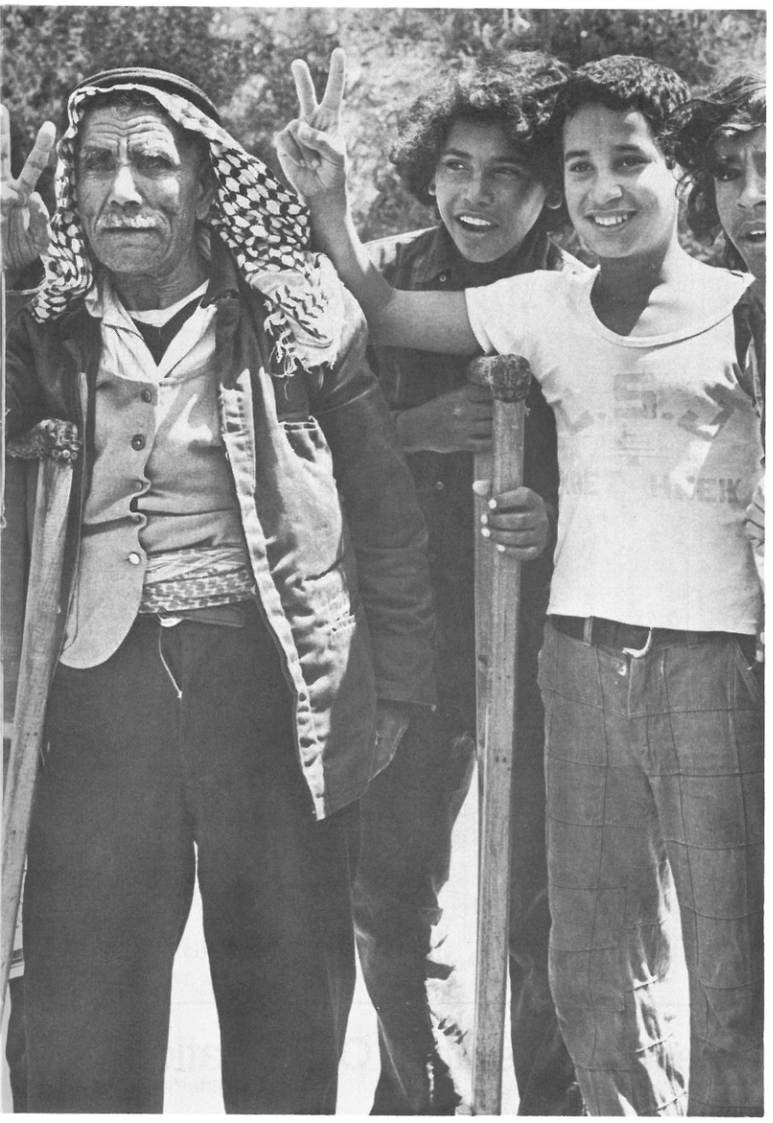
The children in the town are one of the most striking reminders of the continuing determination of the Palestinians to rebuild and struggle in the face of repeated exiles and upheavel. They repeatedly jumped in front of our cameras with their small fingers raised in a "V"—the ever-present symbol of victory used by the PLO. Many of the children lost at least one family member during the siege and witnessed the massacre of 1,500 people when the camp fell to the right-wing.

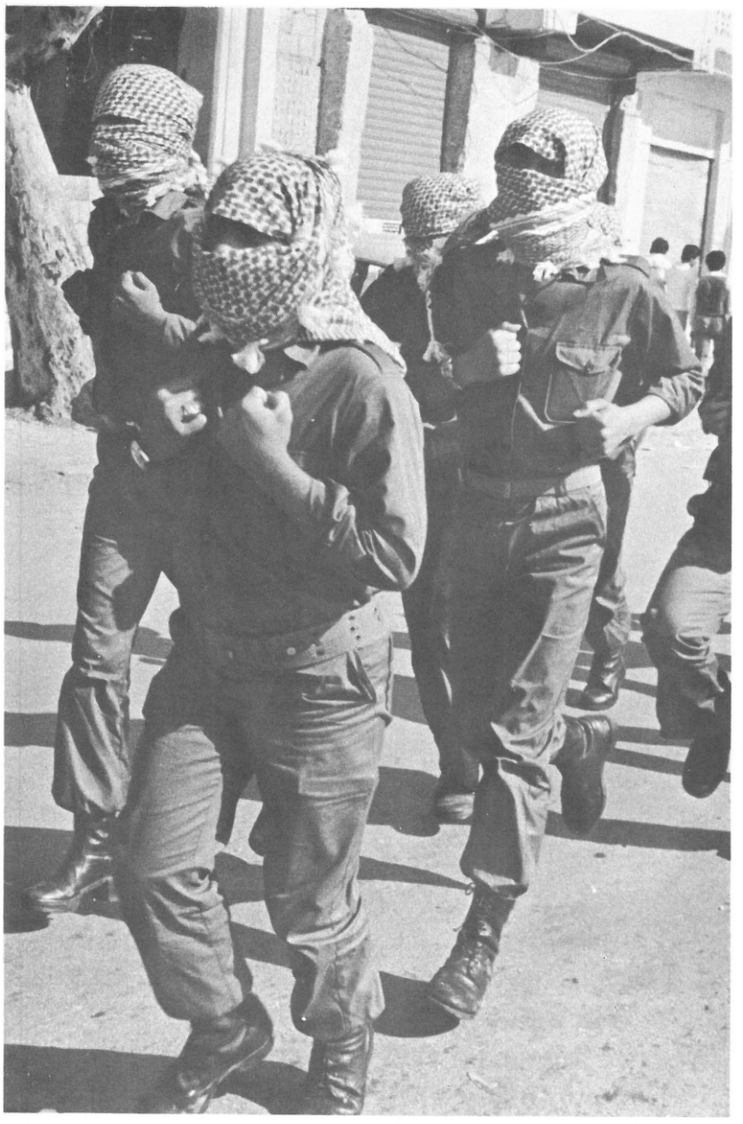
The village is administered by the PLO; no services are offered by the Lebanese government. When the people arrived in Damour, the PLO distributed food, camp-style gas stoves for cooking, and dark gray wool blankets to them. A hospital for the sick, schools for the children, and workshops to produce needed goods and to provide workers with an income are all run by departments of the PLO and its commando groups.

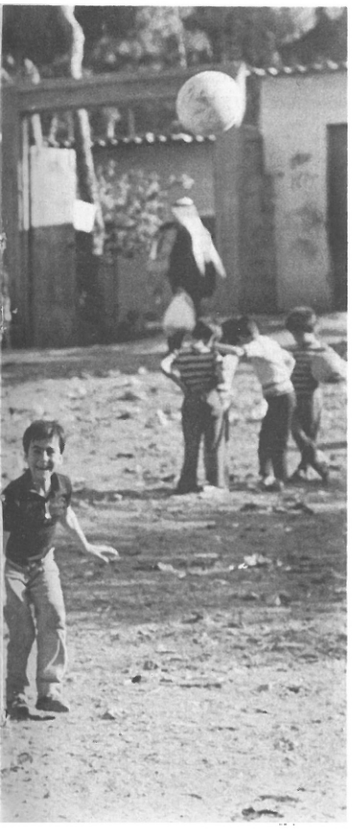
The Tal al Za'atar refugee camp on the edge of Beirut, Lebanon. After a 53-day resistance waged by the 20,000 inhabitants, young and old, men and women, the camp was captured by the Lebanese right-wing and bulldozed so that the Palestinians would not return.

Palestinian survivor of the Tal al Za'atar siege now living in Damour, Lebanon.

TOP LEFT: Street scene in the Shatila Palestinian refugee camp in Beirut, Lebanon.
TOP CENTER: Palestinians in Damour, Lebanon.
TOP RIGHT: Palestinian fighters.
BOTTOM LEFT: Funeral procession for a PLO fighter killed in a battle in Beirut in April, 1977.
BOTTOM CENTER: Palestinian youths playing ball in the Shatila refugee camp in Beirut, Lebanon.
BOTTOM RIGHT: Tal al Za'atar survivors in PLO workshop sewing uniforms in front of Palestinian flag.







Palestinian Leaders Speak

Abu Ammar (Yasser Arafat)

"When one child raises the flag, we are certain of victory. We say, 'Revolution until victory'."

On May Day, we met with Abu Ammar (Yasser Arafat), the chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization Executive Committee. Abu Ammar sat in front of a map of Palestine in a Beirut office, behind a desk full of telephones which rang constantly. He would answer them, sometimes with one phone to each ear.

Abu Ammar stressed to us the Israeli dependence on the United States, the centrality of the Palestine issue in the Middle East, and the determination of the Palestinian people to build a democratic, secular state in their homeland:

In the Middle East, where petroleum is very important, there is something more important. That is the Palestine problem. We need a just settlement, not at our expense. We have paid enough. For thirty years we have been refugees without identity cards. You see what we have suffered, in Jordan, in Lebanon. It is proof that we need our homeland, Palestine.

In our Palestine National Council [the parliamentary body of the PLO in which all Palestinian organizations are represented] we have said we will establish an independent state on any part of Palestine where Israel would withdraw and that is liberated. In our last National Council [March, 1977] we reconfirmed this and said we're ready to establish an independent state.

We are facing continuous conspiracies. But we are sure we will have our victory. We say, "Revolution Until Victory." When one child raises the flag, we are certain of victory.

Sometimes when I'm tired I go to Damour and they give me a new push. A small boy from Tal al Za'atar said: "We still carry on. We're still strong."

We are stronger than before. We have more experience, and more weapons; we didn't use them before, but now we use them self-confidently and accurately.

There will be no peace in this area without solving the Palestine problem. Perhaps they can take from us our guns, our cannons. But they can't take from us our matches. In this area where we have so much petroleum, we need only matches.

Palestine Liberation Organization

The Palestine Liberation Organization was founded in 1964; by the beginning of 1969 the commando groups were its leading force. The PLO embodies the national liberation movement of the Palestinian people; it includes the armed organizations: al Fateh, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Arab Liberation Front, as Saiqa, the Popular Front-General Command, and the Popular Struggle Front. It also includes mass organizations and unions of Palestinian women, students, workers, teachers, peasants, writers, artists, doctors, engineers and lawyers; these mass groups have branches in most countries where Palestinians live.

The PLO expresses the sovereignty of the Palestinian people: it represents the Palestinians internationally, and it and its member organizations carry out political and armed struggle, as well as providing Palestinians in many refugee communities with administration of daily life including programs for education, health care, social welfare and economic production. General policy is determined by the PLO's Palestine National Council, a parliamentary body whose nearly 300 delegates are representatives of the Palestinian organizations and communities.

The long term strategic goal of the PLO is the full liberation of all of Palestine and the establishment there of a democratic secular state. Palestinian leaders have repeatedly emphasized that in such a state all citizens would enjoy equal rights, including those who are presently Israeli Jews.

A transitional goal elaborated by the Palestine National Council session in March 1977 is the realization of "the rights to return, to exercise self-determination and to establish a national independent state over national soil." Concretely this means that the PLO has set itself the interim tasks of creating an independent Palestinian state on national territory to be liberated from Israel—most likely the West Bank and Gaza Strip first—and achieving the right of the Palestinians expelled by the Zionists in 1948 to return to their homes.

Abu Jihad (Khalil al Wazir) is the military commander of Al Fateh. In our interview with him, he focused on the situation of the PLO after the war in Lebanon, described the Israeli military intervention in southern Lebanon, and stressed his expectation that the Israelis will launch another war. He pulled back a curtain behind his desk to illustrate his points on maps of Palestine and the surrounding area:

Some say, in the American and western press, that the PLO was very weak after the battles in Lebanon. I can say to you that after those battles we are stronger in our forces, and more than that, in our experience. We began without heavy cannons or rockets. Now we are using them, like the TOW [a sophisticated U.S. anti-tank rocket] and other rockets that were taken from those fighting us.

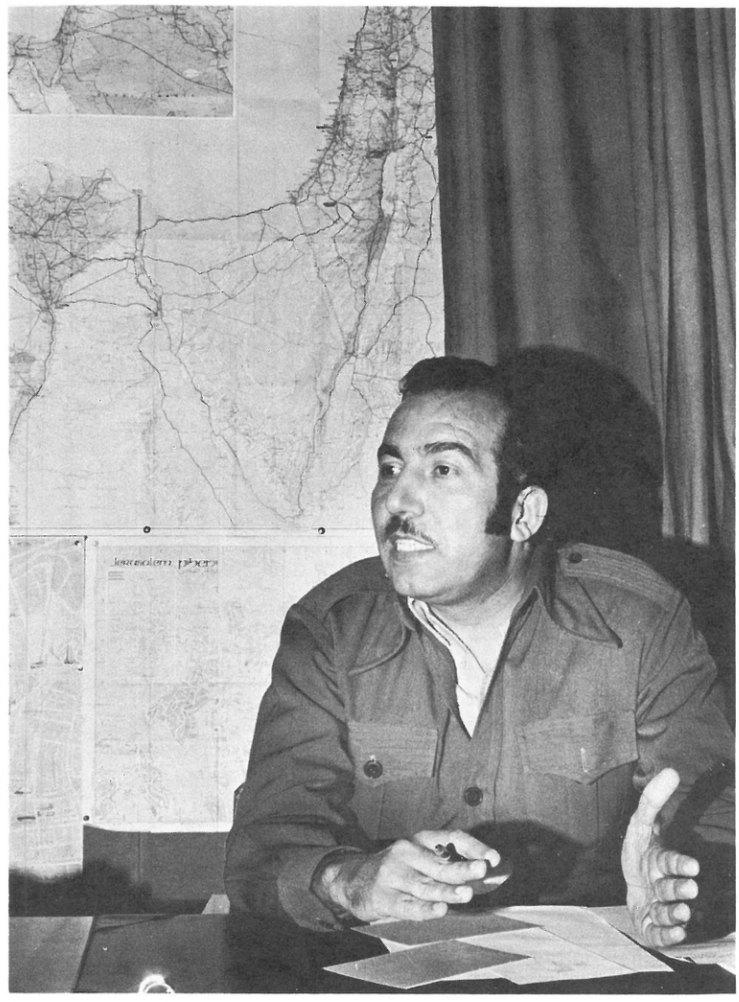
Also, clashes with the authorities left us stronger in the hearts of the people. We have affected the people in Syria and Jordan. And in the occupied land, whenever they heard we had problems, they held demonstrations against the authorities. I think it has strengthened the feeling of the Palestinians.

Our voices are stronger after the meeting in March of the Palestine National Council. It showed the world that the PLO leadership has a wide base of trust. Before the meeting there were many declarations signed from people in the occupied land, and by mayors of the [Palestinian cities] of Nablus, Ramallah, Hebron, Gaza, saying they give their trust to the National Council.

On the military situation in Lebanon, he commented: At Taibe [a southern village] several weeks ago, the Israelis with the forces of [right-wing Lebanese leader Camille] Chamoun tried to build a "security" belt all along the border [inside Lebanon] to cut us off from the occupied territory. They directly occupied seven villages.

We are always expecting Israeli army attacks and aggressions. Day or night we must be cautious. In Beirut the Israeli air force and Israeli infantry have attacked. And in all our refugee camps, we were directly attacked. There have been hundreds of attacks by Israel.

More and more loudly they are discussing a "preventative strike." We are expecting the Israelis to begin a war.



Abu Jihad (Khalil al Wazir)

Abu Iyad (Salah Khalaf)

We also interviewed Abu Iyad (Salah Khalaf), second to Abu Ammar in command of al Fatah. As we were served Arabic coffee in a Beirut office, its walls covered with maps of Palestine, the Middle East and Africa, a map of PLO offices throughout the world, and a plaque reading, "Action Speaks Louder," Abu Iyad commented on Middle East peace talks and the role of the U.S. government:

It is in the U.S. interest to create problems for us. In the Middle East a fair settlement [according to the U.S.] is taking care of its interests.

The majority of the local leaders in the Middle East are kneeling before America. If the U.S. pleases them, they have to please it. [Egyptian President Anwar] Sadat depends on America for everything. If there is no settlement within two years, Sadat will either lose his position or he will have to change his position.

All Arab regimes are scared of us, not as persons, but as a cause. From the start of our revolution the Arab rulers wanted tutelage over it. What happened in Jordan [Black September, 1970], in Lebanon, and now with the mystery of the Syrian stand here in Lebanon, it shows their wish to have tutelage over the Palestinians.

We sometimes force ourselves to go on thorny roads, do things we don't like, but we will never hand them over tutelage, never hand the resistance over to them.

The People Organized

The refugee camps and Palestinian neighborhoods of Lebanon are honeycombed with economic and social institutions administered by the PLO and its member organizations. Through these institutions Palestinians are reorganizing after severe losses suffered during the 18-month Lebanese war and at the same time building on the foundation of the mass mobilization during the war.

A number of organizations provide health care to the Palestinians through clinics in the camps, maternity centers, public health campaigns and hospitals. In new clinics in the refugee camps people who learned first aid and the elements of health care during the Lebanese war are receiving further training as nurses. As a precaution in the event of a new outbreak of war the Palestine Red Crescent (analagous to the Red Cross) has built a number of new underground hospitals.

A tremendous amount of effort is devoted to the care of Palestinian children. Clinics give a special emphasis to pediatric care. Kindergartens gather the children of the refugee camps into safe and attractive environments for play and early education; many organizations run such centers, including the Palestinian Aid Society, whose projects we visited. School age children are organized into the political-military programs such as the Ashbal (lion cubs) and Zahrat (flowers). For children orphaned by the war the PLO has special boarding schools.

Women who participated in the struggle for the first time during the Lebanese war, making stretchers, distributing food, transporting supplies and carrying arms, are now working in PLO workshops, clinics, schools and in the armed organizations. They are mobilized by a number of women's organizations, notably the General Union of Palestinian Women.

Workshops in the camps provide employment for the people. Samed, the Sons of Palestinian Martyrs, whose efforts began with the sale of handicrafts from occupied Palestine seven years ago, has grown into a full scale economic agency with 23 workshops and factories and 2000 workers, producing goods ranging from clothing and furniture to children's map-puzzles of Palestine. Other enterprises, often cooperatives, have been established by the Women's Union and the PLO resistance groups.

These workshops are the scene of a lively political process. During our visit revolutionary committees elected in each of the Samed workshops were engaged in discussing the results of the March meeting of the Palestine National Council. They were also leading meetings to hammer out a set of codes to govern working conditions and internal organization in all Samed workplaces and to prepare for May Day activities.

"We're not just working here. We're working for the revolution," a woman worker in Samed declared to us.

Palestinian orphans of the war in Lebanon in a PLO boarding school.

Outdoor mass meeting on May Day in the Sabra refugee camp in Beirut, Lebanon organized by the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine. Posters lining the wall behind the speakers, published by the General Union of Palestinian Workers, depict Palestinian peasants and workers and bear the slogan: "Glory to the Workers and the First of May. Long Live the Workers' Armed Struggle."

One speaker representing the Palestinian port workers discussed their joint struggle with Lebanese workers, another representing medical workers described their accomplishments during the war in Lebanon, a representative of the Workers Union outlined the group's history, and another speaker told how May Day began with workers' protests in Haymarket Square in Chicago in 1886.

Palestinian workers in this Samed clothing factory in Beirut, Lebanon produce shirts, pants, jackets and uniforms, which were previously made in separate workshops. It is called "Three Martyrs Workshop" after three high-level Palestinian leaders who were killed by Israelis in Beirut in 1973.

Palestinian culture is expressed even by those too young to have seen their homeland. Here a youth organization in a Lebanon refugee camp performs the dabke, a village folkdance of Palestine.

Palestinian child of 8 with chronic tonsilitis is brought by his grandmother to this clinic in the Sabra refugee camp in Lebanon. It is one of the many clinics begun by the PLO during the Lebanese war as a first aid center and maintained since then to expand health services in the camps. It is staffed by an experienced nurse who is an active member of the General Union of Palestinian Women, along with four others trained at the clinic. One staff member, who had lived in the camp for many years, told us she sees her workplace as "a clinic and a center of the revolution" with the tasks of "treatment and organizing the people."

"Until we go back to our homeland..."

Throughout our visit we were repeatedly reminded that the conflict in Lebanon, and more so, in the Middle East, is far from settled. The demands of the Lebanese left and the masses of Lebanese poor have not been met by the state; the Lebanese right-wing has grown even more vitriolic in its opposition to the Palestinian presence in Lebanon; Zionist aggression in Palestine has intensified; the Palestinian rights to return to Palestine, to self-determination and to a state have not been realized.

The forces arrayed against the Palestinian people pose a serious threat of imminent war—a new civil war in Lebanon or a war throughout the Middle East. Southern Lebanon continues to be a flashpoint for Arab-Israeli conflict and is the sort of tinderbox which could explode at any point into regional warfare.

We visited southern Lebanon shortly after the Joint Forces of the PLO and the progressive Lebanese repulsed a major offensive by the Israeli/Lebanese right-wing allies. Just several days after the rightists occupied seven southern villages, five hundred soldiers of the Joint Forces made a lightening move to retake the key town of Taibe. After approaching the town from six different directions on a full-moonlit night, they recaptured Taibe in a battle that lasted only fifteen minutes.

In a southern village under PLO protection, we met a Lebanese family of sixteen people who fled their home in Taibe the night it was occupied by the right-wing. In the course of a discussion with the family, we asked the father what he sees in the future for the people of southern Lebanon. He told us through a translator: "The right wing in the south is only a few leaders. The Lebanese people must unite among ourselves and with the Palestinian people against the Israelis."

We also visited the Palestinian position at the strategic Beaufort Castle. From the medieval fortifications atop the rocky cliffs we looked down to the road below where the Israelis were attempting to truck supplies to their allies of the Lebanese right. From Beaufort we could see in

Sixteen year old Palestinian woman, a member of the militia for three years and a PLO fighter in recent battles in southern Lebanon. She has never seen her home in Safad, Palestine, from where her family was expelled in 1948.

Blindfolded youths assemble rifles in PLO training program.

Palestinian fighters outside their bunker on the front lines in southern Lebanon. From a hilltop position one of them pointed in the distance: "From here I can see Palestine!" Abu Harb, on the left, whose poems are popular in the battalion, recited: "We are the liberation army; we don't kill by the identity card," referring to the Lebanese right-wing's practice of killing people who posses either a Palestinian identity card or one identifying a Lebanese as a Moslem. The youngest of the group, Amid, 13, lost his entire family in the siege of the Tal al Za'atar refugee camp.

the distance the hilltop village of Khiam, held by the Palestinian forces.

After our trip Khiam was the focal target of a general offensive by the Israelis and Lebanese right during September 16 to 26, in which virtually every Palestinian position in the south was struck. In this dramatic intervention the Israelis dropped their rather transparent pretenses and revealed clearly that Israel is the backbone of the Lebanese reactionary forces in the south. Israeli armoured and infantry troops poured across the border and took up positions inside Lebanon, supported by full-scale artillery and air bombardment, while Israeli gunboats positioned themselves off the Lebanese coast at the port of Tyre.

Most of the Israeli forces pulled out at the end of ten days, with little territorial changes in the course of battle. In fact, one Palestinian officer noted to a western journalist: "What we learned from the battle of Khiam is that on the ground, we're equal with the Israelis, but we lack aircraft and anti-aircraft artillery."

The conviction is widespread that the Israeli offensive could be renewed at almost any point.

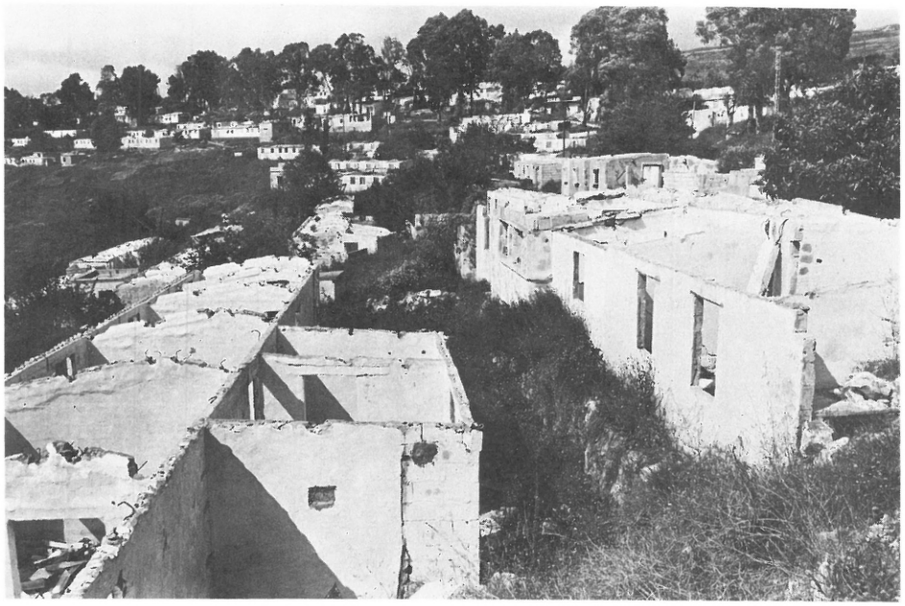
Most of the Palestinians we met during our visit spoke of the likelihood of Israel launching a major war in the near future. Dr. Mahjoub of the PLO Planning Center, a "think tank" serving the Palestinian leadership, remarked to us: "I expect the coming fifth Arab-Israeli war to be started by Israel. They will begin this war when they are forced to withdraw even one kilometer inside occupied Palestine. They can't afford to withdraw.

"Of course they prefer to have this fifth war outside their areas: the Zionist strategy of transferring the war to the land of their enemy. Practically they have transferred the war here to Lebanon for two years.

"Wars will continue between the Israelis and the Arabs," concluded Dr. Mahjoub, "until the Palestinians go back to our homeland and establish an independent democratic secular state."

Lebanese woman in PLO-protected village of Taibe in southern Lebanon. When asked her name, she replied: "I am called Mother of Fighters."

Roofless homes in the Palestinian refugee camp of Nabatiye, close to the Israeli border. Bombed in 1972 and '74, it was also shelled in Israeli offensives this year. Most of the refugees have fled to other camps.



Young members of the Zahrat girls organization sewing handicrafts. Shatila refugee camp, Lebanon.

"It is a long way for us to liberate Palestine. I'm fighting now, but I can't see Palestine. The new generation will continue our struggle.

"The lesson of Tal al Za'atar was the enemy can't destroy us as long as there are the children."

—17 year old woman fighter in Tal al Za'atar now heading children's training program in Damour, Lebanon.

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